

Glossary of Terms

Municipal finances and Town government have a lot of different parts. Running a Town is very different from running a business. Understanding the terms commonly used will make participation at Town Meeting, with Boards and Commissions, and during elections more meaningful. Below is a list of terms that may be referenced.

Definitions

- **2 ½ Override** - A referendum procedure in which the Town can vote to increase its levy limit.
- **2/3rds Majority Vote** - The appropriation of money requires a vote of 2/3rds of the Town Meeting Members present to pass an article.
- **Budget** - Financial plan for the fiscal year of proposed expenditures and proposed means of financing them.
- **Capital Exclusion** - A referendum procedure in which the Town can vote to collect property taxes in excess of its levy limit to pay for a specific expenditure.
- **Cherry Sheet** - Named for the color of the paper traditionally printed on, details the estimated State aid to be received by the Town.
- **Debt Exclusion** - A referendum procedure in which the Town can vote to collect property taxes in excess of its levy limit to pay for a specified period of time.
- **Declared Vote** - The Moderator may decide the sense of Town Meeting by a voice vote. If seven or more members question the vote immediately, the Moderator will ask for a standing vote and declare the vote as final.
- **Fiscal Year** - The town fiscal year for the proposed budget begins on July 1 and ends on June 30.

- **Free Cash** - The amount of surplus revenue not spent from previous fiscal year over and above uncollected taxes that is certified by the State. It is available for appropriation by Town Meeting.
- **Levy Limit** - Under Proposition 2 ½ the maximum amount that the town can raise in property taxes is 2-½% more than the maximum it was allowed to raise for the prior fiscal year plus adjustment for growth.
- **Majority Vote** - A vote of one half plus one of the Town Meeting Members present to pass an article.
- **Move the Question** - A motion to vote to end debate on a pending motion.
- **Point of Order** - A question directed to the Moderator concerning a procedure of the meeting.
- **Reconsideration** - To introduce new information that may change the vote of an article that has already been voted upon.
- **Reserve Fund** - The fund established by Town Meeting for extraordinary or unforeseen expenditures. Transfers from fund need to be approved by the Finance Committee.
- **Town Meeting** - The legislative body of a town. In Fairhaven, it is held annually each spring, at the Elizabeth Hastings Middle School Auditorium on a date designated by the Board of Selectmen. Town Meeting authorizes and appropriates an annual operating budget and capital budget for the Town. It also considers, and acts upon, all proposed bylaws and zoning changes. All matters to be acted upon are published in the "Warrant." Articles are inserted in the warrant by the Select Board or by Citizen Petition. The Select Board publishes a copy of the Warrant at least 4 weeks before a Town Meeting and, again, with recommendations by the Finance Committee and Select Board at least 14 days before a Town Meeting.
- **Unanimous Vote** - A vote of all the Town Meeting Members present.